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ABSTRACT

This study sought to determine the relative importance of specified criteria used in the selection of beginning teachers and also to identify the characteristics of candidates that influence hiring officials. A similar study conducted in Oregon (N. D. Webb 1980) was partially replicated and extended by including private districts and by incorporating district type. Differences in the perceptions of hiring officials in small, medium, and large elementary, secondary, and unified shcool districts were noted. Private schools fell into the small category. Districts studied were located in five California counties. Forty-one criteria were included in a questionnaire sent to superintendents of districts with a student population exceeding 100. Of 117 districts that were surveyed, 75 percent responded. Criteria included four academic criteria, 23 personal characteristics, and 14 teaching competencies. Interviews with a volunteer stratified sample were used to corroborate the reliability of the study by showing consistency with questionnaire data. Conclusions included: (1) Public and private districts display few differences in what they look for in beginning teachers with the one exception that public districts view an applicant's religious or philosophical perspective as being of little importance, whereas private schools view this criterion as important; and (2) public and private districts are interested in beginning teachers' competencies involving student and teacher interactions. References and five tables of data are included. (CJH)

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The Criteria Utilized in the Selection of Beginning Teachers: An Extension and Partial Replication

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to determine the criteria utilized by school officials in the selection of beginning teachers by partially replicating and extending a similar study undertaken in Oregon (Webb, 1980). Extension was accomplished by incorporating private schools as well as public. Forty-one criteria were included in the questionnaire: 4 academic criteria, 23 personal characteristics, and 14 teaching competencies. A total of 117 school districts were surveyed with a total response of 75%. In general, there does not appear to be much difference as to what public and private districts are looking for in beginning teachers with one exception. Public districts view an applicant's personal religious or philosophical perspective as being of little importance while private schools view this criterion as very important. Both public and private districts were interested in the teaching competency of beginning teachers, particularly those competencies focusing on student and teacher interactions. These findings are similar to Webb's findings.

The Criteria Utilized in the Selection of Beginning Teachers: An Extension and Partial Replication

Introduction

What are the identifiable characteristics and criteria which school district personnel use to select entrants into the teaching profession? According to the existing literature, there appear to be few clear clues as to what criteria may be used as good predictors of teaching success. For example, grade point average has not been a very good predictor for success in teaching (Ellsworth, Krepelka, and Kear, 1979). Haberman (1974) has indicated that academic criteria tend to predict students' future success as students and do not necessarily predict success in teaching. On the other hand, Perry's (1981) review shows that grade point average can be correlated to success in teaching.

A recent trend has been the use of standardized competency tests to assess the skills of teacher candidates. The data to support or refute the value of these tests are still unclear because their use on a broad scale is relatively recent. Other attempts to find useful criteria have not been very fruitful. Turner (1975) reported that Baker (1970) correlated specific factors with teacher success and found that scores from a

pre-teacher training interview by a selection committee were significantly related to teacher success as measured by administrator ratings after one year of teaching experience. What seems to remain relatively constant is that earlier ratings of success in teaching predict later ratings.

Research Procedures

The purpose of this study was to determine the importance of specified criteria which are presently being used in the selection of beginning teachers and to identify the characteristics of candidates which influence hiring officials to prefer or reject them. In addition, this study examined differences in the relative importance of these criteria and characteristics as perceived by hiring officials in small, medium, and large elementary, secondary, and unified school districts. The public and private districts studied were all located within the six county service area of California State College, Stanislaus. This region includes Calaveras, Mariposa, Merced, San Joaquin, Stanislaus, and Tuolumne Counties.

A questionnaire and interviews taken from a volunteer stratified sample were utilized for the gathering of data. Interviews were included to corroborate the reliabilty of the study by determining whether the data gathered during the interviews were consistent with acquired questionnnaire data.

The questionnaire used in this study was based on a research project completed by Webb (1980). Certain changes were made to reflect local conditions and concerns. Two questions were dropped; three others were added. The total number of items changed from 40 in Webb's study to 41 in the present study.

The three major categories of items are: 1) 4 academic criteria, 2) 23 personal characteristics, and 3) 14 teaching competencies (see Table 1.)

Insert Table 1 about here

The questionnaire was sent to every public and private school district with a student population in excess of 100. A total of 117 school districts participated. Each superintendent was asked to have the survey completed by a hiring official who was well acquainted with the district's hiring policies or who had extensive experience in selecting beginning teachers. After two weeks a follow-up letter was sent to those superintendents who had not responded. Of the 117 districts surveyed, 88 responses were completed and usable for a return rate of 75 percent. Twenty-nine out of 45 private school districts responded for a total of 64 percent. Of the 72 public school districts, 59 returned the questionaire for a total of 82 percent.

Districts were designated as small if their enrollment was between 100-500; medium, 501-2000; large, 2001 and above. Table 2 examines the size and distribution of the responding districts. Private school districts tended to be composed of single schools and fell into the small category. Public school districts were more evenly distributed according to size.

Insert Table 2 about here

A further categorization of districts was done according to the type of district: elementary, secondary, or unified (Table 3). Eighty-two percent of the districts responding were elementary.

Insert Table 3 about here

Analysis of the Data

This study extended Webb's survey through the inclusion of private districts within the sample and also by incorporating the district type, namely, elementary, secondary, or unified. To gain the information necessary to examine local concerns and hiring practices only a partial replication of Webb's study was undertaken. Due to small sample size in particular categories data concerning the size and type of district are presented only when the findings are interpreted as being of practical significance.

Research Question 1:

What are the criteria used in the selection of beginning classroom teachers in public and private school districts?

(a) What relationship exists between the size of the school district and the perceptions of employing officials concerning the relative importance of various selection criteria?

(b) What relationship exists between the type of school district and the perceptions of employing officials concerning the relative importance of various selection criteria?

The survey questionnaire contained 41 selection criteria. Using a four-part Likert scale, participants were asked to rate the importance of each criterion. The scale was converted to an interval scale for the purpose of rank ordering the criteria. A criterion with a mean of 1.50 or less was determined to be very important, 1.51 - 2.50 to be somewhat important, 2.51 - 3.50 to be of little importance, and 3.51 or more to be of no importance.

Public school districts chose 28 of the 41 criteria as very important and none were identified as not important. Of the first 13 criteria, 10 were teaching competencies. The criteria found to be of little importance were those concerned with the personal and academic characteristics of prospective teacher candidates. When further analyzed according to size, two criteria, marital status and residence while growing up, were found to be of no importance in large public districts.

The analysis of the rank order of the means of the criteria indicates that students' performance during student teaching is very important since 10 of the first 13 criteria are teaching competencies. The only competency not ranked unanimously as very important was preparedness to supervise extra-curricular activities though no district saw it as being of no importance. These findings were closely in line with the findings of Webb's study.

T-tests were calculated for public school districts in order to determine if the probability differences between the means were significantly greater than chance ($p \leq .05$). Based on the size of the school district the following criteria were found to have significantly higher means (i.e., less important): 1) grade point average ($p = .02$) was less important in small public districts than in medium public districts; 2) prior involvement in community organizations ($p = .02$) and residence while growing up ($p = .001$) were less important in medium public districts than in large public districts.

Based on the type of district: 1) the need to see the applicant in a teaching situation ($p = .02$) was found to be less important in public elementary districts than in public secondary districts; 2) the educational philosophy toward innovation ($p = .03$) was less important in public elementary districts than in public unified districts; and 3) the need to see the applicant in a teaching situation ($p = .03$) was less important in public

secondary districts than in public unified districts. In general this study's findings were similar to Webb's, although Webb found significantly higher means for criteria different than those designated above.

In private districts the t-test was not used because the number of medium and large districts and the number of secondary and unified districts was too small to warrant this analysis.

The criteria chosen as very important when public and private districts were combined consisted of 13 teaching competencies and 14 personal and academic characteristics. Fourteen criteria were designated as somewhat important or of little importance. No criteria were chosen as unimportant.

When viewed separately private districts chose essentially the same criteria as very important as did public districts except in the case of religious or philosophical points of view. Public districts placed this criterion, religious or philosophical points of view, in the category of little importance while private districts selected it as very important. Attitude toward the handicapped was rated as very important by the public districts and somewhat important by private districts. The rank orders differ slightly between public and private districts, but for practical purposes these differences are not significant (see Table 4).

Insert Table 4 about here

There is a high level of correlation between the rank order of the means of the criteria based on size and type of district. Care should be taken when determining the practical significance of these findings.

Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the degree of correlation between the means of criterion items for public and private districts; small, medium, and large districts; and elementary, secondary, and unified districts. Spearman rank-order correlation coefficients were also calculated for these same variables.

	Pearson	Spearman
Public Districts and		
Private Districts	$r = .86$	$r_s = .84$
Public Districts		
Small and Medium Districts	$r = .98$	$r_s = .89$
Small and Large Districts	$r = .97$	$r_s = .88$
Medium and Large Districts	$r = .97$	$r_s = .88$
Public and Private Districts		
(selected items)		
Small Public and Small Private	$r = .86$	$r_s = .79$

When public and private districts were correlated, a high degree of agreement was evident regarding the assessment of the importance of the criteria. More simply, there does not seem to be much difference as to what public and private districts are looking for in beginning teachers. The difference appears to be even less evident when different sized public school districts are correlated. These findings were determined to be significant at least at the .01 level.

The findings for public districts are almost identical with Webb's study. Correlations were calculated for small private districts, but the sample size for medium and large private districts was so small that no correlations for these districts were computed.

Research Question 2:

What are some of the characteristics displayed by teacher candidates which are preferred by employing officials or which cause hiring officials to reject candidates possessing those characteristics?

Eighty-five characteristics of the selection criteria were studied. The percentage of total responses was calculated in order to show the extent to which hiring officials preferred, rejected, or were indifferent to the characteristics studied. Due to the volume of data involved, only select data are presented:

a) College degree earned. In public districts there was an 86 percent preference for the California Clear Credential. In

private districts the preference was 93 percent. Fifty percent of the public districts would reject candidates with an emergency credential, while 79 percent of the private districts were indifferent to this criterion.

b) Elementary or secondary emphasis in courses. A 72 percent preference was indicated by public districts for elementary candidates to have a strong elementary background while 70 percent were indifferent to subject specialization at that level. The preference for a strong area of specialization for secondary candidates by public school districts was 82 percent. In private districts the preference for a strong elementary background for elementary candidates was 92 percent.

c) Age, marital status, residence while growing up. Both public and private districts indicated a general indifference to these criteria.

d) Appearance and health. Both public and private districts (96%) preferred applicants who possessed these attributes. The majority were indifferent toward grooming which differed from local standards. Also, they were generally indifferent to any disability a candidate might have.

e) Source for references. When public and private districts were combined, references from the master teacher were preferred by 85 percent; school administrators' references were preferred by 74 percent; 66 percent were indifferent to the references of the college supervisor while only 33 percent preferred them; and 75

percent were indifferent to the references from a college instructor. Private districts preferred the references of the master teacher (93%).

Research Question 3:

What standard of performance in the identified teaching competencies is regarded as acceptable by employing officials?

a) What relationship exists between public and private school districts and the standard of performance in the identified teaching competencies regarded as acceptable by employing officials?

Hiring officials were asked to indicate the response that most closely indicated the quality of performance they were prepared to accept in hiring a candidate. The scale included three responses: 1) H = we insist that the candidate must be highly proficient in this competency (upper 25 percent as compared to other beginning teachers); 2) A = we are willing to hire a candidate who has average proficiency in this competency (middle 50 percent as compared to other beginning teachers); and 3) BA = we are willing to hire a candidate who has below average proficiency in this competency (lower 25 percent as compared to other beginning teachers).

Though the order in which teaching competencies were chosen differed, public and private districts selected the same four out of five teaching competencies in which hiring officials would expect beginning teachers to have a high degree of competence (Table 5). Hiring officials wanted their candidates to be highly

proficient in vitality and enthusiasm, to maintain effective relationships with students, to maintain a classroom atmosphere which fosters learning, and to demonstrate professional and ethical behavior. The differences resulted from public districts highly rating the importance of the demonstration of adequate knowledge of subject matter and private districts preferring that candidates be prepared to make continued improvement in their teaching behaviors. Preparedness to supervise extra-curricular activities was seldom expected at a high proficiency level though average proficiency was generally desired.

Insert Table 5 about here

A chi-square analysis was used to estimate the probability that the proportions of prefer, reject, indifferent responses across public and private districts would occur by chance. When public and private districts were compared the following variables were found to be significant ($p \leq .05$): attitude toward handicapped students; need to see applicant in a teaching situation; maintenance of a classroom atmosphere that fosters learning; and capacity to assess student needs, progress, and achievement.

Analysis of Interviews

In order to corroborate the reliability of the study, oral interviews were conducted with ten administrators who were directly involved in the hiring of new teachers. This procedure

enabled the researchers to better determine whether or not the interview data were consistent with the survey findings. The interview participants included four private and six public school officials representing both urban and rural schools. The schools ranged in size from 152 to 18,101 pupils. These subjects were volunteers who represented different types and sizes of districts which were included in the study.

The criteria most frequently mentioned by private and public school administrators as being of major importance in selecting beginning teachers were "relates well to students and associates easily with staff and parents." References in the student teacher's placement file and impressions of the applicant in the job interview were often used for the determination of these criteria. These findings are very similar to the results of the survey.

All of the private and none of the public school administrators rated the criterion, "Adheres to the religious ideology of the school" as being of major importance, an additional finding borne out by the survey. There was general agreement among administrators that certain criteria, particularly a lack of proficient written and oral expression or a lack of attention to grooming, would cause an applicant to be rejected regardless of his/her other qualifications. Academic competence in one's subject area as indicated by grade point average in college coursework was given a lower rating than the criterion of

sociability (the most frequently mentioned criterion). These interview results added support to the findings contained in the analysis of the survey.

Criteria not directly related to the classroom (age, residence while growing up, travel experience, and union affiliation) were the least highly rated by survey participants and were given no mention by any of those who were interviewed. In general the interviews corroborated the results of the survey. No other analyses were performed on the interview data.

Discussion

In this study ten of the first 13 criteria with the smallest means were competencies related to student teaching. In Webb's (1980) study, the first ten criteria with the smallest means were also related to student teaching. In Cartwright's (1973) study, the study on which Webb based his work, only five of the first ten smallest means were related to student teaching. This increase in interest toward competency during student teaching suggests that the move toward accountability in schools and competency based teacher education continues to be prominent.

Also, as reported by Webb and evident in this study, hiring officials seek high proficiency in skills related to interaction between students and teachers. In public and private school districts vitality and enthusiasm are viewed as important components. Academic qualifications are viewed as less than very important; this may be due to the present emphasis of hiring officials' on classroom teaching skills.

The lowest rated criteria were not directly associated with the classroom. Age, residence while growing up, travel experience, and union affiliation were not viewed as particularly relevant to the hiring of new beginning teachers.

The main difference between public and private districts centered around the criterion of a particular religious or philosophical point of view. This criterion was of little importance to public districts and very important to private districts.

A high degree of correlation was evident between the mean ratings of hiring officials in districts of various sizes and types in public and private districts. All correlations were at least .79 with many being in the .90+ range. Differences between the means were very small as were the variances; they became larger as the importance of the items decreased.

The attempt to break the districts into various categories provided few useful results since half the sample sizes were ten or less. Some significant differences ($p \leq .05$) were evidenced between public districts of varying sizes.

In public school districts 90 percent of the hiring officials preferred candidates who were neat and well-groomed, had a good health record, used proper grammar and spelling in their letters of application, were fluent and used correct grammer in their speech, showed no bias toward students, and were warm and outgoing. Over 80 percent preferred candidates who possessed the

California Clear Credential, who displayed a strong area of specialization, who were enthusiastic about personal ideas, who were honest and morally upright, and who had strong master teacher references.

Private district preferences were very similar except that, additionally, over 80 percent desired a specific religious or philosophical viewpoint in beginning teachers.

Few criteria were widely accepted as being suitable for rejecting a candidate. An average of 74 percent of the public districts and 81 percent of the private districts did, however, reject overt bigots, those candidates who did not speak or write in a manner reflecting proper usage, and individuals of below average intelligence. Approximately 73 percent of the private districts also tended to reject candidates based upon an uncertainty of moral soundness or generally critical personal references.

Differences in districts, according to size, were few. Small public districts had a lower preference for the references of master teachers (67%) than did other public districts, and small public districts also wanted candidates who saw teaching as a lifetime career (83%). Medium sized public districts preferred above average intelligence in its candidates (84%) more so than other public districts. They also preferred candidates to have prior experience with youth (84%) and chose school administrators as the preferred source for references (84%). In large public districts 80 percent wanted candidates who saw teaching as a

lifetime career; 93 percent wanted applicants who demonstrated excellent skill when they were seen teaching; 80 percent preferred the references of school administrators. In small private districts 83 percent wanted candidates to display excellent skill when they were observed teaching.

Public elementary districts did not have as high a preference for candidates with a strong elementary background (68%) as compared to private districts (90%). Public secondary districts preferred high praise on references (83%) and wanted candidates to demonstrate excellent skill when observed teaching (87%). Large public districts tended to prefer candidates who showed excellent skill when observed teaching (93%).

Conclusions

Overall there appears to be considerable agreement among various public and private districts regardless of size or type as to the relative importance of the criteria utilized in this study. These findings also parallel closely those determined by Webb, thus adding greater credibility to his findings.

Much of what hiring officials look for is based on competencies as evidenced through student-teacher evaluations. Of the various competencies considered important, most focus around teacher-student interactions. Master teacher and administrator references are more highly regarded than those of the college supervisor.

Emphasis is placed on many personal characteristics such as appearance, correct writing and speaking skills, a lack of bias, being warm and outgoing, and having integrity. These characteristics, along with the competencies discussed above, tend to be more important than academic preparation. Administrators seem to want skilled classroom teachers who relate well with students, who are excellent models for the youth they teach, and who have adequate preparation in the subject matter being taught.

In effect, there does not appear to be much difference as to what public and private districts are looking for in beginning teachers except with regard to one's personal religious or philosophical point of view. Public schools view this criterion to be of little importance while private schools view it as being very important.

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Table 1

Questionnaire Items

Academic Criteria

1. College degree earned
2. Overall grade point average in college
3. Emphasis in courses taken: Elementary candidates
4. Emphasis in courses taken: Secondary candidates

Personal Characteristics

5. Age
6. Marital status
7. Residence while growing up
8. Intelligence
9. Appearance
10. Health
11. Letter of application
12. Speech
13. Attitude toward children who are culturally different
14. Attitude toward handicapped students
15. Teacher union or professional organization involvement (California Teachers' Association or American Federation of Teachers)
16. Prior involvement in community organizations
17. Travel experience
18. Interest in teaching as an occupation (principle reason for choice)
19. Prior experience in working with children or youth
20. Emotional adjustment
21. Enthusiasm
22. Personal integrity
23. Personal references
24. Source for references
25. Educational philosophy toward innovation
26. A particular religious or philosophical point of view
27. Need to see applicant in a teaching situation

Teaching Competencies

28. Demonstration of adequate knowledge of subject matter
29. Selection and use of appropriate teaching materials
30. Vitality and enthusiasm
31. Ability to maintain pace and sequence of learning activities
32. Preparation and use of effective instructional plans
33. Use of a variety of instructional strategies
34. Maintenance of a classroom atmosphere that fosters learning
35. Capacity to assess student needs, progress, and achievement
36. Demontration of professional and ethical behavior
37. Maintenance of effective relations with students
38. Maintenance of effective relations with school staff
39. Preparedness to make continuing improvement in teaching behaviors
40. Willingness to accept leadership and responsibility
41. Preparedness to supervise extra-curricular activities

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Table 2

Size of District

	Small 100-500	Medium 501-2000	Large 2001+	Total
Public	19	25	15	59
Private	25	4	0	29
Total	44	29	15	88

Table 3

Type of District

	Elementary	Secondary	Unified	Total
Public	38	6	15	59
Private	21	4	4	29
Total	59	10	19	88

Table 4

Rank Order of the Means of the Criteria[a]

Variables

Criteria Chosen By:				
Rank Order	Public/ Private Combined	Public	Private	Webb's Study
1	34	30	34	34
2	30	34	39	30
3	37	37	37	37
4	28	28	36	28
5	39	39	22	39
6	36	36	30	35
7	22	22	28	32
8	35	35	26	33
9	20	20	13	36
10	13	33	35	—[b]
11	38	38	38	11
12	11	32	20	31
13	12	13	11	22
14	32	31	12	15
15	21	21	1	29
16	31	12	29	20
17	33	11	18	38
18	29	10	21	12
19	10	29	40	4
20	1	4	32	3
21	4	1	31	13
22	24	23	24	1
23	23	9	10	18
24	18	3	33	40
25	40	24	23	23
26	3	14	3	9
27	9	30	19	10
28	14	18	9	41
29	41	41	4	14
30	19	8	8	8
31	8	19	41	19
32	27	27	14	25
33	25	25	25	2
34	2	2	2	16
35	16	16	27	—[b]
36	26	5	16	17
37	5	17	5	5
38	17	26	17	7
39	15	7	6	15
40	7	15	15	6
41	6	6	7	—[b]

[a] The numbers in the four right-hand columns correspond to the number of each criterion listed on Table 1.

[b] Criterion not found in Webb's study.

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Table 5

Hiring Officials' Responses Concerning Acceptable Levels of Proficiency in Teaching Competencies

Levels of Proficiency[a]

% of Responses

Teaching Competencies	Public and Private			Public			Private		
	H	A	BA	H	A	BA	H	A	BA
Demonstration of adequate knowledge of subject matter	70.9	29.1	0.0	79.3	20.7	0.0	53.6	46.4	0.0
Selection and use of appropriate materials	54.7	45.3	0.0	58.6	41.4	0.0	46.4	53.6	0.0
Vitality and enthusiasm	83.7	16.3	0.0	89.7	10.3	0.0	73.0	27.0	0.0
Ability to maintain pace and sequence	59.3	40.7	0.0	69.0	31.0	0.0	39.3	60.7	0.0
Preparation and use of effective instructional plans	65.1	33.7	1.2	69.0	31.0	0.0	57.1	39.3	3.6
Use of a variety of instructional strategies	52.9	45.9	1.2	61.4	38.6	0.0	35.7	60.7	3.6
Maintenance of classroom atmosphere that fosters learning	82.6	17.4	0.0	86.2	13.8	0.0	75.0	25.0	0.0
Capacity to assess student needs, progress and achievement	66.3	33.7	0.0	71.4	28.6	0.0	55.6	44.4	0.0
Demonstration of professional and ethical behavior	77.9	22.1	0.0	79.3	20.7	0.0	75.0	25.0	0.0
Maintenance of effective relationships with students	82.6	17.4	0.0	87.9	12.1	0.0	71.4	28.6	0.0
Maintenance of effective relationships with staff	61.6	38.4	0.0	63.8	36.2	0.0	57.1	42.9	0.0
Preparedness to make continued improvement in teaching behaviors	72.1	27.9	0.0	72.4	27.6	0.0	71.4	28.6	0.0
Willingness to accept leadership and responsibility	47.5	52.3	1.2	50.0	48.3	1.7	39.3	60.7	0.0
Preparedness to supervise extra-curricular activities	31.4	66.3	2.3	41.4	56.9	1.7	10.7	85.7	3.6

[a] H = high proficiency, A = average proficiency, BA = below average proficiency